

Message Text

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12

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

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TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJ: UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE IN BASQUE PROVINCES

REF: A. MADRID 3625 B. MADRID 3573

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. SHOOTING OF TWO CIVIL GUARDS JUNE 5, DEATH OF GERMAN TOURIST SHOT FOR FAILURE TO HEED CIVIL GUARD CHECK POINTS AND TRIAL OF ETA SUSPECTS IN BURGOS HAVE CAUSED NEW TENSION IN BASQUE PROVINCES. GOVT INTENDS TO SET UP SPECIAL INVESTIGATING COMMISSION ON BASQUE "SUBVERSION" BUT MEANWHILE RIGHTIST EXTREMISTS SEEM TO HAVE IMPLICIT OFFICIAL APPROVAL TO CARRY OUT "VIGILANTE" ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. TWO CIVIL GUARD MEMBERS WERE MACHINE-GUNNED ABOARD TRAIN NEAR SAN SEBASTIAN JUNE 5; ONE DIED AND SECOND IS NOT EXPECTED TO LIVE. THESE ARE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH VICTIMS OF ETA ATTACKS SINCE BEGINNING OF YEAR. MEANWHILE, A FEMALE GERMAN TOURIST WHO WAS SHOT MAY 27 FOR FAILURE TO HEED BORDER CHECKPOINT PRESCRIPTIONS OF CIVIL GUARD HAS DIED. FRG EMBASSY HAS PROTESTED TO GOS.

3. AT CONCLUSION OF WEEKLY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING MAY 24 MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND TOURISM SAID GOS CONDEMNED

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VIOLENCE FROM ANY QUARTER IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT RIGHT

WING DEMONSTRATION IN MEMORY OF ETA VICTIMS HELD FOLLOWING MASS IN MADRID MAY 22 (REF B). MINISTER OF JUSTICE SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD CORRESPONDENT OF BASQUE NEWSPAPER THAT GOS WOULD SET UP COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE REASONS FOR "SUBVERSION" AND EXISTENCE OF ANY "VALID POINTS" IN PROBLEM. ASKED ABOUT NECESSITY OF STATE OF EXCEPTION DECREED APRIL 25, MINISTER REPLIED THAT SUBSEQUENT EVENTS "HAVE SHOWN THAT IS WAS NECESSARY".

4. CAPTAIN GENERAL OF SIXTH MILITARY REGION WHICH INCLUDES BASQUE PROVINCES COMPLETED OFFICIAL VISIT TO AREA MAY 26 (REF B). ECHOING HIS COMMENTS ABOUT ROLE OF ARMY IN MAINTAINING INTERNAL PUBLIC ORDER WE NOTE THAT CAPTAIN GENERAL OF CATALONIA, LT. GEN BANULS TOLD LOCAL OFFICIALS MAY 25 THAT ARMY WOULD NOT FAIL TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION; "FORCES OF PUBLIC ORDER ARE DOING THEIR PART AND WE WOULD DO THE SAME IF IT WERE NECESSARY". COMMENTATORS HAVE GIVEN PROMINENCE TO STATEMENTS BY TWO GENERALS ON READINESS OF ARMY TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER IF NECESSARY.

5. AMCON BILBAO REPORTS THAT ATMOSPHERE IN BASQUE PROVINCES HAS BECOME TENSE, UGLY, IMINOUS. RIGHT WING EXTREMISTS ARE CIRCULATING LEAFLETS SAYING THAT "WE CAN DEFEND OURSELVES" AGAINST ETA ATTACKS IF GOVT WOULD GIVE US ARMS. OPPONENTS OF STATE OF EXCEPTION HAVE PLANNED DEMONSTRATION JUNE 11 TO PROTEST GOVT MEASURE; MEANWHILE THEY ARE CIRCULATING THEIR OWN LEAFLETS. POLICE ARE REPORTEDLY "EVERYWHERE IN SIGHT"; INDEED AMCON REPORTS THT LEVEL OF POLICE VIGILANCE HAS NOT DIMINSHED SINCE APRIL 25, AND THAT THERE ARE INCREASING RUMORS ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT-ORDERED CURFEW.

6. TRIAL OF SEVEN ALLEGED ETA EXTREMISTS IS CURRENTLY UNDDER- WAY IN BURGOS, THE SAME CITY WHERE EARLIER WIDELY REPORTED TRIAL WAS HELD IN 1971. TWO HAVE ALEADY BEEN CONDEMNED TO DEATH; SENTENCES ON FIVE OTHERS EXPECTED JUNE 5.

7. COMMENT: VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL TENSION HVE RISEN AGAIN IN BASQUE PROVINCES. APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS OF GOVT TO CURB ACTIVITIES OF RIGHT WING "VIGILANTE" GROUPS CONSISTING OF "GUERRILLEROS DE CRISTO REY" AND HARSH SENTENCES HANDED DOWN IN LATEST BURGOS TRIALS WILL PROBABLY EXACERBATE RATHER THAN PLACATE EMOTIONS OF AFFECTED BASQUES. STATEMENTS OF CAPTAINS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GENERAL RESPONSIBLE FOR TWO PRINCIPAL DISSIDENT REGIONS -- BASQUE PROVINCES AND CATALONIA -- ARE NOT ACCIDENTAL BUT RATHER WARNING THAT ARMY IS ULTIMATE GUARANTOR OF ORDER. ARMED FORCES HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN UNFLINCHING SUPPORTERS OF NATIONAL UNITY AND MUCH LESS RECEPTIVE THAN SOME OTHER POLITICAL FORCES TO REGIONAL DEMANDS. MEANWHILE, CORTES IS CONTINUING TO DEBATE ISSUE OF REGIONALISM. OPPOSITION GROUPS, ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION, ADVOCATE BROADER REGIONAL RESPPNSIBILITY. WITH

CONTINUING VIOLENCE IN BASQUE PROVINCES AND TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION
OF ARMED FORCES TO REGIONAL AUTONOMY IT IS UNLIKELY THAT
POSSIBILITY FOR GRADUAL LOOSENING OF CENTRALIZED STRUCTURE
WILL MAKE MUCH HEADWAY.
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